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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Korea and United States National Security		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Steven A. Raho III		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		12. REPORT DATE 9 March 1989
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 47
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) In the twenty-first century Asia will be the most economically, politically and militarily dynamic region of the world. As the winds of change blow across the Pacific, old alliances could be broken and new symbiotic partnerships formed which few of today's military strategists can envision. Although tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have eased greatly in the past year, the Korean peninsula still remains a potential flash point which could lead to major East-West confrontation. Unfortunately, from a historical perspective,		

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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KOREA AND UNITED STATES NATIONAL SECURITY

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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United States Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
9 March 1989

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Steven A. Raho III, LTC, AV

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In the twenty-first century Asia will be the most economically, politically and militarily dynamic region of the world. As the winds of change blow across the Pacific, old alliances could be broken and new symbiotic partnerships formed which few of today's military strategists can envision. Although tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have eased greatly in the past year, the Korean peninsula still remains a potential flash point which could lead to major East-West confrontation. Unfortunately, from a historical perspective, United States policy toward the Republic of Korea has often been characterized by vacillation and uncertainty. It is imperative that U.S. strategists take into account the current frictions between the U.S. and South Korea, and establish a policy which protects the regional interests of our allies while maintaining American influence in the Pacific. As the rising tide of nationalism sweeps through South Korea, it is vital for the U.S. to address three important issues causing friction between our countries: forward deployment of U.S. military forces on the peninsula; the alleged basing of nuclear weapons on Korean soil; continuance of a military command structure which places a U.S. general officer in control of a significant portion of South Korea's military forces. Through a visionary assessment of our role in an emerging multipolar world, the United States can develop an appropriate force structure and integrated strategy, which will ensure regional stability while providing for continued economic and political growth throughout South Korea, the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

INTRODUCTION

To the average American it appears the once cordial and cooperative relationship enjoyed by the United States with the Republic of Korea is on a downward spiral. Growing anti-American sentiment throughout South Korea is evidenced by increasing assaults on U.S. servicemen, such as the attack on 17 November 1988 in which two soldiers were attacked and injured by club-wielding youths at a military housing complex near Eighth United States Army Headquarters in Seoul. Furthermore, on 26 February 1989, just two days prior to President George Bush's visit to the Republic, violent protests broke out in at least six South Korean cities, and the government was forced to put 120,000 riot police on alert to quell the disturbances. During the President's visit he was burned in effigy at Inchon, a city where thirty-nine years ago U.S. troops landed to repel an invasion from the communist North.

Many citizens, especially veterans of the Korean war, feel anger and frustration toward South Korea for turning against the United States--a country which sacrificed the lives of over 50,000 military personnel to save the divided nation from communist domination, which invested billions of dollars to assist in reconstruction after the devastation of war, and which guaranteed national security through a Mutual Defense Treaty (and United Nations presence) so that the citizens of South Korea could enjoy the economic miracles and democratic reforms they have now achieved.

Unfortunately, growing anti-Americanism is only one of a multitude of issues now disrupting U.S./South Korean relations. There are trade frictions caused by a nine billion dollar trade deficit, debates over forcing U.S. military headquarters to move out of Yongsan garrison, pressure to free South Korean troops from U.S. operational control, concerns over Korea's proposed revision of the status-of-forces agreement which would give the South Korean government more control over U.S. citizens, and disputes over the alleged deployment of nuclear weapons on Korean soil. In addition, there are mounting pressures within the U.S. for a unilateral troop withdrawal from Korea as a means to save dollars in the federal budget. With a rising bipartisan political consensus throughout the United States that the federal budget must be reduced and with increasing competition for dollars among government agencies, the reduction of military investment around the world appears to be fiscally rational.

Along with increased pressure to reduce the military budget, there is a growing feeling throughout the world that "peace is breaking out all over." In addition to several highly successful summit meetings between President Reagan and General Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev and their highly publicized signing of the INF treaty, there have been numerous other worldwide movements toward peace. We have seen an end to the Iran-Iraq war; Cuban troops are withdrawing from Angola; the Vietnamese/Cambodian border is relatively quiet; the Soviets have made good on their promise to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. Addi-

tionally, the USSR has extended an olive branch toward Japan, and a Sino-Soviet summit has recently been scheduled. Is the Russian bear really less hungry? Are Mikhail Gorbachev's overtures of sweetness and light genuine? Is the world, and therefore the Korean peninsula, really a safer place?

Although it is still too early to judge the genuineness of Gorbachev's overtures, there is no doubt they have had a significant effect on the attitude of the American public toward increased defense spending. Certainly the current public attitude contrasts sharply with the one former President Reagan encountered in 1981. Appalled by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and embarrassed by the U.S. inability to respond during the Iranian hostage crises, the American public and Congress agreed that the military budget had to be increased. As a result we saw one of the largest peacetime buildups of American forces in history, with the 1981 real growth trend reaching 12.1%.

It's hard to imagine the change in attitude that has occurred since 1981. As a result of the large U.S. budget deficit and Gorbachev's peace initiatives, the American public and Congress are clamoring for reduced military spending. President Bush has recently announced that this year's defense budget will be frozen at zero growth. The American public seems to be willing to support a slowdown in weapons modernization, cut back in funding for research and development, reduction in the size of the military force structure and return of U.S. forces from forward deployed locations. Unfortunately, many of those ad-

vocating such severe measures to curb defense spending have given little thought to the future impacts of such actions on the United States national military strategy.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of historical and current events on United States security arrangements with the Republic of Korea, focusing on the following issues:

- * How important is stability on the Korean peninsula to U.S. national security?
- * What are U.S. national interests in the Asia-Pacific theater?
- * What are the major issues causing friction between the U.S. and South Korea?
- * In this era of constrained resources, and a huge federal budget deficit, does it make sense to continue the forward deployment of over 40,000 U.S. military personnel on Korean soil?
- * What should be the focus for future U.S. Army involvement in South Korea and the Asia-Pacific theater?

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Those who cannot remember the past
are condemned to repeat it.

George Santayma, 1906

To determine the extent to which South Korea should be viewed as key to U.S. national security interests, it is important to briefly examine the significant historical events which have led to our current policy.

Prior to 1945 the United States displayed an attitude of indifference toward Korea, and for the most part the U.S. acquiesced in the Japanese occupation of the peninsula. Actual government-to-government relations between the U.S. and Korea came to an end in 1905 when Japan forced Korea to sign the Protectorate Treaty. The treaty officially annexed Korea and assigned the government of Japan responsibility for the diplomatic affairs of the country. The U.S. was forced to withdraw its diplomatic representatives from the peninsula, commencing forty years absence of government-to-government dialogue (1905-1945).¹ President Roosevelt stated that he felt it was better to have Korea under the control of Japan than subject to the control of expansionist Russia. Consequently, Japan remained the dominant power in Asia until 1945.

The situation changed dramatically with the sudden collapse of the Japanese war machine and the landing of U.S. occupation forces on Inchon in September 1945. The lack of U.S. wartime planning for Korea's postwar disposition (and limited U.S. appreciation of Korea's strategic position) became evident as we negotiated the terms of Japan's unconditional surrender. We concurred in a hasty decision to divide Korea along the 38th parallel, with the USSR occupying the land to the north and the United States the land to the south.²

While agreeing to divide Korea along the 38th parallel, the U.S. naively credited the Russians with having genuine intentions of eventually supporting a unified Korea. The U.S. viewed the

decision to divide the peninsula as a temporary military solution and did not consider the division a permanent dividing line. The American goal envisioned the establishment of a unified and democratic Korea in accordance with the provisions of the Cairo Declaration of 1943, in which the U.S., Britain and China affirmed that in due course Korea should become free and independent.³

The Soviet perception of the division was much more self-serving and strategically oriented. By promoting a dual occupation of Korea, the USSR thought they would increase the likelihood of a similar arrangement in Japan and Europe. The Russians were also determined that Korea would never again become a base for a Japanese attack against them. They viewed the Korean peninsula much as they viewed Finland, Poland and Romania--as a springboard for an attack on the USSR.⁴

Following division of the peninsula, differences between the North and South intensified and chances for reconciliation grew more remote. Negotiations with the USSR were suspended, and eventually the interest of the U.S. turned away from reconciliation and more toward the future of the South.⁵ The U.S. initiated major programs of military and economic assistance, equipped and trained a national military force, promoted a large scale land distribution program, and provided considerable technical assistance in the fields of agriculture and finance. Between 1945 and 1949 the United States provided more than \$500 million in economic aid to South Korea.

The early focus of U.S. strategic thinking was defined in a 1946 Joint Chiefs of Staff document (JCS 1259/16), which defined objectives to deny the Soviet Union bases from which they could cut sea lines of communications (SLOC). Thereby, the U.S. sought to reduce threats to the entire region, including China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. The JCS also highlighted the growing Soviet control in North Korea; because of JCS concerns, an initial early troop withdrawal from the South was rescinded.⁶

By 1947 intense bureaucratic debate arose within the U.S. over the strategic importance of Korea. As a result of rapid cutbacks in the military budget and faced with a scarcity of resources, military planners moved toward a maritime strategy that downplayed the importance of the Korean peninsula as a key U.S. security interest. Secretary of Defense Forrestal argued that Korea would be irrelevant in the event of hostilities in the Far East, would in fact be a military liability. He concluded that therefore the continued presence of ground forces was neither required nor justified. The National Security Council finally concurred, and all U.S. troops (with the exception of a five-hundred man military assistance group) were withdrawn from South Korea in 1949.⁷

On 12 January 1950 Secretary of State Dean Acheson, with the President's endorsement, delivered a major speech to the National Press Club in which he stated that the U.S. defense perimeter in the Pacific stretched from northeast to southwest along the Aleutians to Japan to the Ryukyus to the Philippines.⁸ North

Korea mistook his speech as a signal that the U.S. had abandoned South Korea, and on Sunday morning, 25 June 1950, launched an attack along the 38th parallel in an effort to reunify Korea under communist domination.

The American response to the unprovoked attack was an emotional one. The President immediately dispatched American forces to the peninsula--claiming that although North Korea was the aggressor, it was the Soviet Union which was responsible for the war. He stated that communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen and twenty years earlier.⁹

The revisionist school of Korean history disagrees, arguing that the U.S. had ample warning of an attack. According to revisionists, the Central Intelligence Agency Far Eastern Command at Tokyo and Department of the Army knew an attack was imminent. They point out that prior to the war the U.S. knew North Korea had the capability to attack. Therefore, by withdrawing forces from South Korea the U.S. was deliberately negligent. Thereby U.S. passivity "provoked" a North Korean attack.¹⁰

The Korean war proved costly for everyone involved. The U.S. committed 350,000 soldiers, spent \$18 billion, suffered 157,000 casualties and over 50,000 deaths. South Korean casualties were double those of the United States, while North Korea and Chinese casualties totaled over 1.4 million.¹¹

In 1954, following a negotiated cease fire, the United States and South Korea concluded a U.S. - ROK Mutual Defense

Treaty. The treaty institutionalized U.S. interest in Korea-- with the essential objective for the U.S. not being the security of Korea per se, but rather overall regional security. U.S. forces in South Korea thus became the containment force for Northeast Asia; the stationing of forward deployed forces on Korean soil was considered essential in order to deter communist expansionism in the Pacific region.¹²

With the election of Richard Nixon to the Presidency in 1968, there was a major change in the thrust of U.S. national security policy.

-- NIXON/CARTER DOCTRINE

While visiting Guam in July 1969, President Richard Nixon announced new guiding principles for U.S. foreign policy; they came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine. The doctrine stated in part that the U.S. should

provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security...in cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility for providing the manpower for its defense.¹³

Although the immediate goal of the Nixon Doctrine was to allow for an honorable withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, the doctrine represented a significant shift toward restrained globalism, which was in sharp contrast to previous U.S. presi-

dents' positions. By stipulating that allies would be responsible to provide the manpower for their own defense, the doctrine shifted the U.S. role more toward deterrence and therefore excluded "automatic" U.S. participation in future Asian wars. In order to lend credibility to his doctrine (and due to the cost of maintaining ground force in Korea while the U.S. was engaged in a war in Vietnam), President Nixon withdrew the Seventh Infantry Division from South Korea.

The most controversial debate over U.S. policy toward Korea occurred following the 1976 presidential election when Jimmy Carter announced he was going to keep his campaign promise to withdraw all U.S. ground forces from Korea within a four to five year period. President Carter had promised to withdraw ground forces from Korea in order to exploit post-Vietnam concerns among the electorate of further military involvement in Asia--the so-called vietnam syndrome. President Carter's advisors felt it essential that he avoid a situation in which the U.S. could become involved in another ground war in Asia. However, faced with strong public, congressional and international opposition, and after having been enlightened on the potential consequences for instability in Northeast Asia, the President reversed his position on withdrawing forces.¹⁴

-- REAGAN/BUSH FOCUS

When President Reagan ascended to the presidency, he established a view toward Korea (and Asia) in direct contrast to that of President Carter. Korea's President Chun was the first foreign head of state invited to the White House after Reagan's inauguration. During Mr. Chun's visit President Reagan assured him the U.S. would not withdraw its ground forces from the Pacific. Instead he offered to increase U.S. military presence by adding an additional air contingent. America's new resolve was reaffirmed by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger during the thirteenth annual ROK-United States Security Consultation Meeting in 1981. Then he reiterated the commitment of the U.S. to abide by the provisions of the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty and to come to the assistance of South Korea in the event of an invasion from the North.¹⁵

Although it is still too early to judge whether President Bush will follow in the footsteps of President Reagan in his commitment to Korea, there are indications that a reassessment of policy is being considered. On 23 January 1989 Benjamin F. Schemmer, editor of Armed Forces Journal, appeared on a national news program and stated that as a friend of the newly nominated Secretary of Defense he was recommending a withdrawal of forces from Korea. The following day, 24 January 1989, an article in the Wall Street Journal predicted that President Bush was off to a controversial start in Korea because of his selection of ex-CIA official Donald Gregg as U.S. Ambassador. The article notes that the previous Ambassador, James Lilly, was also a former CIA

official. It contended that the consecutive manning of the office by two CIA men set an unhappy tone for early ROK-U.S. relations. Korean newspapers are quoted as stating that the new administration could not escape criticism that it had trampled on the feelings of the Korean people by totally ignoring the strong suspicions harbored by Koreans toward both the American and Korean CIA (KCIA). Both government and opposition leaders felt the appointment of Ambassador Gregg would further fuel the fires of anti-Americanism developing within the country.¹⁶

-- SUMMARY: A U.S. ROLLER COASTER POLICY

From a historical perspective, there has been no clear cut pattern or constant definition of U.S. security policy in South Korea. Throughout the 20th century U.S. policy has lacked continuity and consistency; rather it has vacillated and appeared ad-hoc. Prior to 1945 the U.S. displayed indifference and acquiesced in the Japanese colonization of the peninsula; in 1945 we landed troops on Inchon; by 1949 we had determined Korea was a liability and withdrew our forces; in 1950 the U.S. Secretary of State stated that Korea was outside the American defense perimeter in the Pacific -- yet five months later the U.S. entered the Korean war and spilled the blood of thousands of soldiers on Korean soil; in 1954 we concluded the U.S. - ROK Mutual Defense Treaty to demonstrate our commitment to the Asian region; in 1969 the Nixon Doctrine seemed to pull the rug out from under our 1954

treaty obligation; by 1976 the U.S., under the Carter Doctrine, had once again decided to pull all of our ground forces out of Korea; by 1981 we reversed our strategy and actually increased our military force structure; now in 1989 the U.S. is once again considering a withdrawal of military forces from the peninsula as a means to assist in balancing the federal budget.

ASIA -- A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By the first decade of the next century much of the political, economic and military power in the world will be centered in Northeast Asia. According to a report issued by the President's Commission on Integrated Long-Range Strategy, whose members include Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Fred Ikle and General John Vessey, most of the world's leading powers will eventually be Pacific powers. The Commission's report predicts that by 2010 China may have the second largest gross national product in the world, followed by Japan and the Soviet Union. The GNP's of middle powers like Korea will also grow substantially relative to the countries of Western Europe (see figure 1).¹⁷

Owen Harries in "The Coming Dominance of the Pacific," cites a century old quote by Secretary of State John Hay:

The Mediterranean is the ocean of the past, the Atlantic is the ocean of the present and the Pacific is the ocean of the future.¹⁸

By 2010, China and Japan will have the economic capacity to act as major world powers. Unless "restructuring" produces startling new gains, the Soviet Union's share of the world economy will shrink. The GNPs of middle regional powers like India and Korea (not shown) are likely to grow substantially relative to those of Western Europe.

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCTS OF SELECTED COUNTRIES

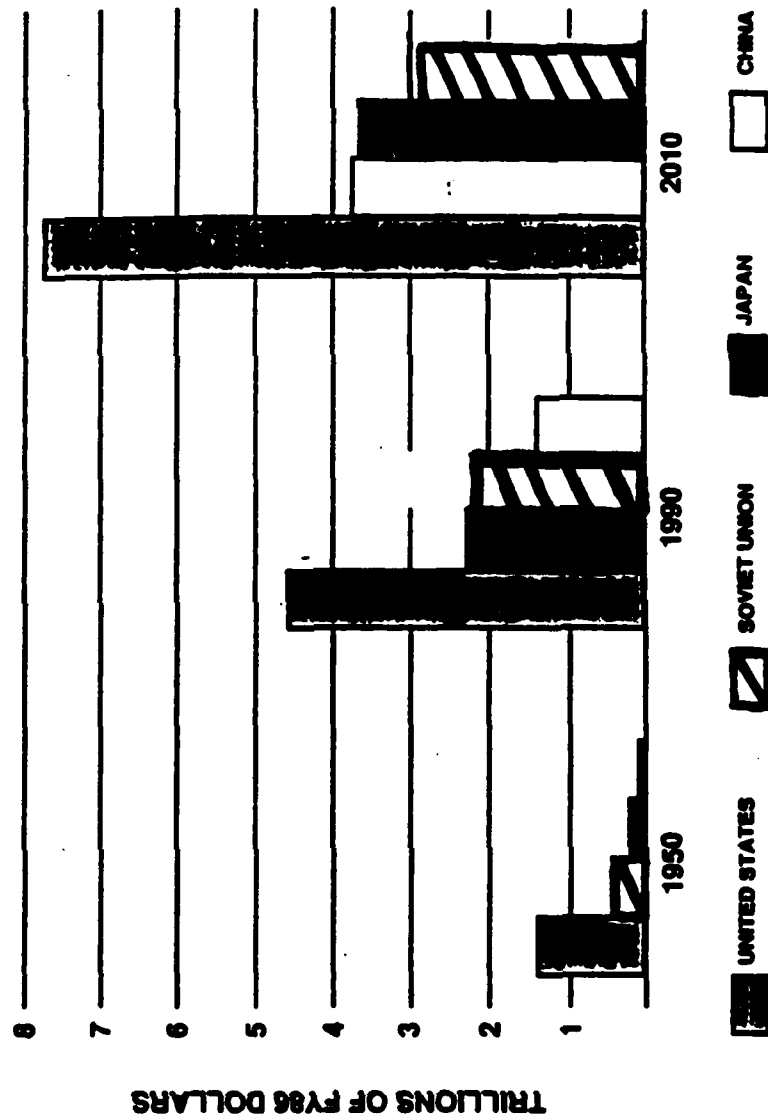


Figure 1

Harries laments that even though the Asian-Pacific region is one of the most dynamic economic regions in the world, it gets little serious attention from America's strategic planners--mostly due to the penchant for strategists and generals to prepare to fight the last war. He notes that

as the world's leading democratic country the United States should be able to walk and chew gum simultaneously. The fact that European and hemispheric questions continue to need attention is no justification for neglecting what is happening in the Pacific.¹⁹

The economic growth of the Pacific region over the past several years has indeed been phenomenal. Since 1980 the region has surpassed Europe as the United States largest trading partner, and the margin of difference grows each year. Trade with Japan alone exceeds trade with the United Kingdom, Germany and France combined. China's GNP has doubled in the last ten years, and Japanese foreign aid now exceeds U.S. foreign aid.²⁰

Seven of the world's most populace countries are in Asia, as are seven of the world's largest armies. Four Asian countries now have over one million soldiers under arms: China (3.2 million); India (1.4 million); Vietnam (1.3 million); North Korea (1.0 million). Nuclear proliferation throughout the region is a distinct possibility. In addition to the USSR and China, the nations of India, Pakistan, South Korea and Taiwan have the potential to one day produce nuclear weapons.

The flow of natural resources throughout the Pacific is critical to the economies of industrialized nations. Asian

nations provide most of the free world's supply of strategic resources--such as rubber, chromium, tin, titanium and platinum. Japan and South Korea receive over 50% of their oil from the Middle East via the region's vital sea lines of communications (SLOC). Over 50% of the world's key maritime choke points are located in the Pacific Basin. Because of the multinational and interrelated nature of world economics, trade disruptions in the Pacific would be felt worldwide.²¹

Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev has recognized the potential of Asia and has significantly increased his diplomatic efforts in the region. In a historic speech at Vladivostok on 28 July 1986, Gorbachev made it clear that he has a sweeping and thoughtful agenda for the Soviets. He left no doubt that he is interested in building new, fair relations in Asia and the Pacific. His speech has been touted in the Soviet press as "new political thinking" in action.²²

Secretary Gorbachev's strategy is to increase Soviet power and influence in the region while simultaneously reducing the influence of the United States. His initiatives are unquestionably driven by economic necessity--a floundering domestic economy. Mr. Gorbachev realizes that he needs technical assistance from Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, in order to extract the vital raw materials (gold, coal, iron, nickel, copper, and gas) from resource rich Siberia.

William F. Scott, writing in ROA National Security Report, comments on the General Secretary's realization that the Soviet

economy has been stagnant compared to those of Japan, South Korea and China, which are becoming major economic powers. Dr. Scott observes that

Looking down the road to the year 2000 and beyond, the Kremlin leadership may be alarmed. Follow-on weaponry will be dependent upon a modernized economy, a revitalized science and technology, and a more capable work force.²³

Although Soviet rhetoric now takes on a conciliatory tone, the USSR still maintains a significant military capability in the region. In fact, throughout the last decade the Soviet military buildup in the region has been substantial. Currently, over one-quarter of the Soviet ground force (1.1 million men in 50 well equipped divisions) are stationed along the border with China, and another 16,000 man army division is stationed in the islands north of Japan. The 860 ship Soviet Pacific fleet is now the largest of their four fleets, and it includes an impressive array of surface ships with supporting aircraft. Their submarine fleet has also increased substantially, now floating approximately 129 general purpose, attack and nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines.²⁴

-- A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Due to the emergence of Asian economic, political and military power the world security environment twenty years from today will be quite different. The United States and the USSR will no longer be the world's two dominant powers, but rather

only two of as many as four or five dominant powers. Alliances and coalitions will have shifted, and it may be hard to tell our friends from our enemies. The Pacific Basin will become increasingly important to U.S. military strategists. The current European oriented American military strategy will be reoriented toward the fastest growing and most dynamic region of the world--Asia.

Fortunately, President George Bush has recognized the potential preeminence of Asia. By attending the funeral of recently deceased Japanese Emperor Hirohito, his first foreign visit since coming into office, our new President has signaled to the world that he is very interested in the future of the Asian-American relations.

WHY IS KOREA IMPORTANT?

Korea is geostrategically and geopolitically unique. It is the only nation in the world where the interests of four major powers intersect--the United States, Soviet Union, China and Japan. Because of the continued tension between the economically vibrant South and militant, unpredictable North, Korea may well be the security flash point for Asia. Stability on the peninsula is important because renewed fighting could inevitably draw in all major powers. In Asian Perspectives on International Security, Australian scholar T. B. Millar assesses the pivotal role of the Korean peninsula in global politics:

Northeast Asia is an area of dangers to world peace because it provides the nexus between four great powers with competing ambitions: the Soviet Union, determined to develop the resources of Siberia and to have unimpeded access to the Pacific for mercantile shipping and the projection of naval power; China, determined to be influential over its continental sphere; Japan, a maritime power, lying across the Soviet exits and dependent upon the U.S. for protection against Soviet hegemony; and the US, dependent upon Japan for its Western Pacific strategic presence. The Korean peninsula lies at the nexus, manifesting by its division the competing ambitions, pulled and pressed within, and without, a self-propelled pawn in a complex power game.²⁵

At its southern end the Korean peninsula is separated from Japan by a strait only 120 miles wide. Consequently, Korea has historically been referred to as the "land bridge" between China and Japan. This 120 mile wide sea lane, the Korean/Tsushima Strait, is considered by the U.S. to be one of sixteen vital maritime choke points for controlling Soviet naval operations.²⁶ The strategically important position of the Korean Strait is shown at figure 2.²⁷ To Moscow, both Korea and Japan must appear as threatening barriers to Soviet access to warm water sea lanes leading to the Indian and Pacific Oceans (see figure 3).²⁸

As a result of USSR antipathy toward the close ties between the U.S. and South Korea, Soviet military writings have accused South Korea of serving as "Washington's Bridgehead in the Far East." According to the Soviet Military Review, United States imperialism has steered a course for world domination, and the Seoul regime has served as an accomplice to establish a nuclear missile bridgehead for the U.S. in Asia. The article notes that

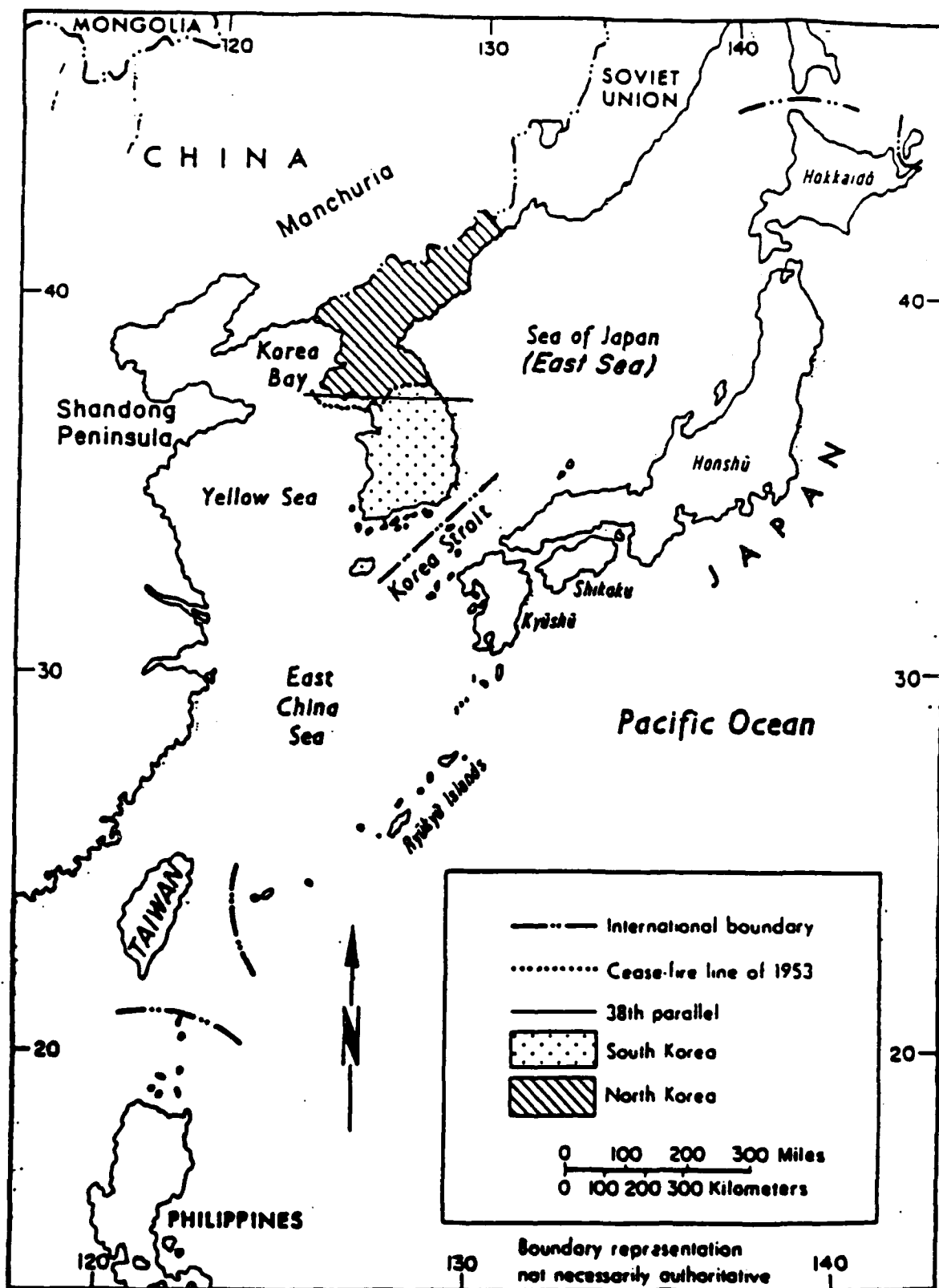


Figure 2. South Korea in Its Asian Setting

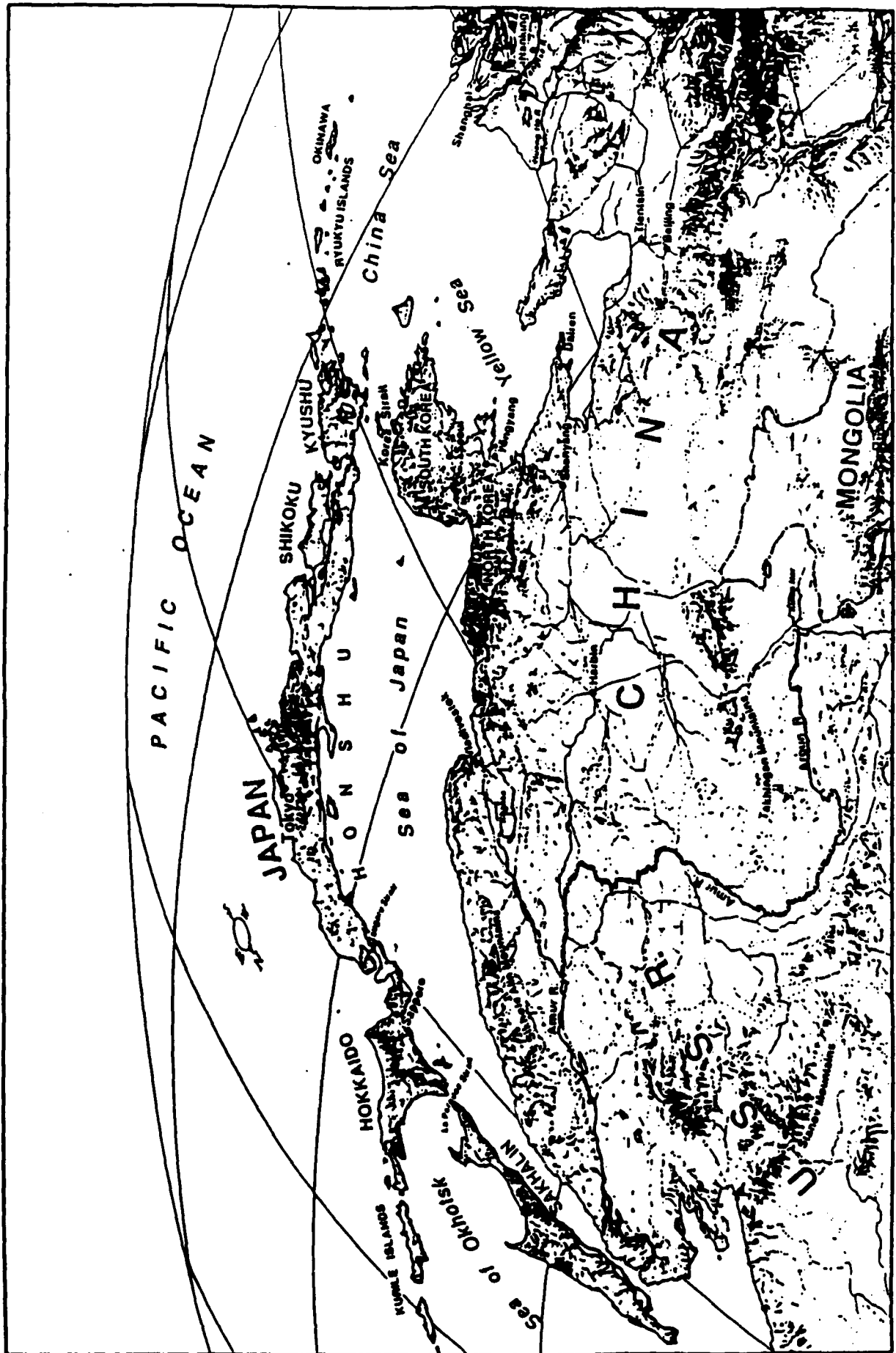


Figure 3

in contrast to the Soviet's desire to turn the peninsula into a nuclear-free zone and USSR desire for the democratic unification of the two Koreas, Washington has artificially whipped up tensions which pose "a serious threat to peace in the Far East and throughout the Asia-Pacific region."²⁹

It is easy to understand why the Soviet Union attempts to foster disunity between the U.S. and South Korea. In addition to the Republic's strategic importance, South Korea is an economic miracle which has risen like a phoenix from the ashes of war. The emerging importance of the Republic as a newly industrialized nation (NIC) is evidenced by the fact that Korea is now the United States second largest trading partner in Asia (behind Japan), although trade relations remain tense due to a nine billion dollar trade deficit. Korean merchandise exports to the U.S. were \$34.7 billion in 1986, \$44 billion in 1987, approximately \$55 billion in 1988, and are expected to rise to \$77 billion by 1990. The Republic's GNP continues to rise at a stunning pace--real growth reached 11.1% in 1987 and is expected to exceed 12% for 1988.³⁰

South Korea's entrance onto the world stage was further solidified on 17 September 1988, when it became only the second Asian country ever to host the Olympic Games. These turned out to be the largest Olympics in history in term of numbers of participating countries and athletes. However, to the dismay of many Americans, most young Koreans attending the Olympic games openly and enthusiastically supported Soviet athletes rather than

Americans. According to Sung-Chull Junn, this intense dislike of the United States should be of more than academic interest to Americans. Mr. Junn states that

Korea seems destined to become one of the world's most powerful economies by the end of the century. That economy will be run tomorrow by those same students who are burning the American flag today. For that reason alone, anti-American sentiment should be viewed by the Bush administration as a potentially serious foreign-policy challenge.³¹

According to the U.S. State Department, United States policy toward Korea rests upon three interdependent components: security, democracy and economic partnership.

A stable economy promotes general security, greater security enhances the economy, and steps toward democracy enhance both security and economic progress.³²

Clearly, the United States has been an important ally for South Korea, and the maintenance of a strong U.S. military presence on the peninsula has served as a deterrent to aggression from the North. However, as the U.S. ponders its future defense commitments, three major military issues should to be addressed:

- * The continued forward deployment of U.S. ground forces in Korea.
- * The alleged basing of tactical nuclear weapons on Korean soil.
- * The military command relationship which places a U.S. General Officer in operational control of Korean armed forces.

--Forward Deployed Forces

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Statement on the Military Posture of the United States (FY 1989) notes that a key factor in the success of U.S. alliances has been deterrence through the forward deployment of military forces.

These forces demonstrate the US commitment to the common defense and serve notice that an attack will be met immediately by US opposition. In peacetime, the American presence among allies reduces the coercive potential of Soviet and Soviet surrogate military threats and facilitates early reinforcement in crises. If deterrence fails, sufficient forward-deployed forces can facilitate an effective combined defense.³³

Although the forward deployment of U.S. military forces has maintained stability in Korea for over thirty-five years, there are mounting pressures to reduce our commitment of forces in an effort to eliminate the federal budget deficit. Many of the arguments favoring withdrawal of forces are similar to those heard during the debates over the Carter withdrawal proposals in 1977.³⁴

Edward A. Olsen, writing in the Naval War College Review, states that it is time the Carter troop withdrawal proposals be taken off the shelf. Mr. Olsen feels a sizeable portion of ground forces could be reduced if the U.S. took more aggressive measures to strengthen the conventional military capability of South Korean military forces while simultaneously pressuring Japan to accept a greater share of the defense burden for East-Asian sea lanes. Mr. Olsen states it is important that Japan be pressured into accepting a trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea defense agreement.³⁵

Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr. also supports the proposition that it is time to bring U.S. troops home. Colonel Summers indicates that in view of the rise of Korea to status as an economic competitor of the United States and as a result of increased trade relations and improving ties with its East-Asian neighbors (USSR, China, and Japan), the return of American soldiers is a point that must be considered seriously.³⁶

Richard L. Armitage, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (now Secretary of the Army) takes a view opposite Mr. Olsen and Colonel Summers. He feels Korea is the most dangerous flash point in Asia. He contends the benefits of the status quo on the Korean peninsula are underappreciated by many in the U.S., noting that an elimination of U.S. forces from South Korea would save the American taxpayer nothing if our withdrawal resulted in North Korea attacking and once again embroiling the U.S. in a war on the Korean peninsula. Mr. Armitage adds that:

talk of removing US forces from Korea may play to xenophobic and isolationist public sentiments here at home; but they are seriously misguided. They fail to account for the underlying facts or consequences of such actions.³⁷

Former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Pacific and now Ambassador to Indonesia Paul Wolfowitz agrees with Mr. Armitage and feels it would be a mistake to take Asian security and stability for granted. Mr. Wolfowitz points out that the seven largest armies in the world operate in Asia--and every one of them has been at war in Asia sometime during the last forty

years. He notes that, while diplomacy is important, it must be supported by adequate military strength. It is therefore important for the US to continue to play a crucial balancing role in the region.³⁸

Deputy Secretary of Defense William H. Taft IV warns that in spite of the more conciliatory tone of the Soviets, Asia is still at risk. He cautions that the U.S. must be careful not to encourage the Soviets by sending a signal that America is growing tired of its forward defense strategy. Because security is the cornerstone upon which Asian development rests, a withdrawal of forces could send the wrong signal (to all of Asia) and indicate we are withdrawing from our collective security responsibilities.³⁹

However, the greatest risk to withdrawing U.S. forces from Korea is the continued militarization of North Korea. While South Korea's military forces number approximately 630,000 personnel, unofficial estimates now put North Korea's military strength at over one million troops on active duty. Pyongyang's armed forces are now nearly twice as large as those of France and West Germany, and three times as large as Britain's. And all of these countries are nearly three times as populous as North Korea.⁴⁰ Moscow continues to supply the North with a wide variety of sophisticated weaponry, such as the MIG-23 jet fighter, Scud-B surface-to-surface missile, their most sophisticated air-to-air missile (AA-7 Apex), and the very lethal SA-5 surface-to-air missile.⁴¹

In fact, North Korea ominously continues to militarize while spurning South Korean President Roh Tae Woo's overtures for reunification. North Korea continues to assert that it will pursue reunification only after all U.S. troops are removed from the South.⁴²

Both the U.S. and South Korea have stated that U.S. troops will remain on the peninsula until South Korea is in a position to defend herself completely. Although estimates vary about when this will occur, most generally agree on a time frame between the mid 1990's to the year 2000. According to a collaborative analysis prepared by the Korean Institute for Defense Analysis and the Rand Corporation, South Korea's economic and technological advantages over the North will grow rapidly.

The question posed at the outset - "on whose side is time?" - can be answered directly: South Korea's economic, technological and military capabilities can be expected to grow substantially relative to those of North Korea during the next decade. The resulting balance should increasingly and predominantly favor the South.⁴³

There is no doubt, then, that at some future point South Korea will be fully capable of its own defense. Even so, the pressing question which will remain is, "How important are U.S. forces as a deterrent to an attack from the North?" It must not be forgotten that the South Korean capital city, Seoul, is only twenty-five miles from the 38th parallel demilitarized zone (DMZ). Therefore, even a short thrust across the DMZ would put North Korean forces within artillery range of Seoul, and Seoul is already well within the range of the North's missiles. Since

approximately one-fourth of the South's population and the preponderance of its financial/business institutions are in Seoul, an attack on the capital would be devastating in terms of physical destruction, loss of human life and long-term economic impact. Consequently, even though South Korea might be fully capable of beating back a North Korean attack, the results of even a short war would be devastating to the South's continued economic development.

South Korean President Roh Tae Woo has indicated that although some Koreans might prefer a lower U.S. military presence in his country, he is in no hurry to see the troops leave.

with no change in the military threat from North Korea, this is not the proper time to discuss the reductions of American forces.⁴⁴

Even the former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Carter Administration, Richard C. Holbrooke, feels troop withdrawal from Korea is not a good idea:

recent suggestions that America start withdrawing its troops are dangerously premature. The troops may ultimately be reduced, but, having been part of the equation that has brought stability to the region for 35 years, they should not be tampered with unilaterally on the eve of other major events.⁴⁵

Although most strategic planners currently agree that now is not the optimum time to withdraw forces, the question which ultimately should be addressed is, "When South Korea is fully capable of both defending against and deterring an attack from the North, is there still a viable reason for the U.S. to maintain a military presence (ground force) in Asia?" It is impor-

tant for strategists to be visionary when attempting to answer this question: they must remember how quickly the world situation can change. In trying to determine the proper role for U.S. forces ten, twenty or thirty years from today it is important to remember history--only fifteen years ago China was our devout enemy, and Iran one of our closest friends! If the Soviet Union achieves her economic aims will she once again become belligerent and aggressive toward her Asian neighbors? Will another country in the region follow in the footsteps of Iran and turn fanatically anti-American? Will increased competition for scarce resources (oil, land, food, strategic minerals, etc.) cause border disputes that could seriously undermine regional stability? How confident would our Asian allies be of American support if no U.S. ground forces were stationed in Asia? What U.S. forces should be available in Asia to defend U.S. bases and citizens in the event of a rapidly developing crisis?

Because the current U.S. - USSR Conventional Stability Talks (CST) will probably have a significant impact on the future force structure and disposition of U.S. military forces, it is important that the United States not prematurely reduce forces in Korea. Most defense analysts predict that troop strength in Europe will unquestionably be a bargaining chip during these talks. It therefore makes little sense to rush headlong toward also reducing Army forces in Asia--our Army is already too small in force structure to carry out the wide range of strategic missions it has been assigned. A better alternative would be to

restructure our Asian force in a manner which would allow it to rapidly respond to a wide variety of contingencies, from low intensity conflict to conventional war. The risks inherent in premature withdrawal of forces far outweigh the costs of continued forward deployment. If we err, it surely should be on the side of continued stability.

It is important that in the future a U.S. ground force in Asia be viewed mostly in the context of its larger deterrent and strategic role. As we move toward the "Century of the Pacific" it is critical that the U.S. maintain the confidence of our Asian allies; such confidence can be maintained only through an irreversible commitment to keeping a U.S. military ground force in this vital region of the world. As always, the most salient symbol of U.S. resolve remains the presence of an American soldier on the ground.

--Nuclear Weapons in Korea

The official position of the U.S. government is that it will neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons on foreign soil. However, according to Mr. Joo-Hung Nam, the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Korea has been an open secret for some time. Mr. Nam contends that as early as 1975 the U.S. had an estimated 675 tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea.⁴⁶ Recently, the alleged basing of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea has become a touchy issue--one that could serve to

quickly fuel the fires of anti-Americanism. It is an irritant to Korean students and to an increasing number of Korean citizens.⁴⁷

Those arguing for positioning nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula point to the weapons' success as a deterrent to communist aggression. It is frequently noted that President Eisenhower's threat to use nuclear weapons near the end of the Korean war had a strong influence on the Chinese and served to break the deadlock in armistice negotiations. Once the Eisenhower administration stated its resolve to use nuclear weapons, if needed, the Chinese made concessions and concluded an armistice agreement.⁴⁸ The threat of U.S. nuclear weapons is also credited with discouraging North Korea from launching an attack against the South during the last thirty years -- a period when it was generally conceded they had a significant force superiority over South Korea.⁴⁹

We have two additional arguments in support of nuclear weapons: First, an absence of weapons might diminish both South Korean and other Asian allies confidence in the U.S. commitment to the region. Second, a withdrawal of weapons would cause Seoul to seek its own nuclear capability. However, within the past several years, the case for withdrawing weapons seems to be gaining momentum.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find anyone who can articulate a scenario where the U.S. would revert to crossing the nuclear threshold in Asia, and nuclear weapons deterrent value is

therefore at best negligible. Additionally, as the combined forces of the U.S. and South Korea achieve an overall balance with the North, it will get increasingly difficult to justify basing nuclear weapons in Korea to even our most ardent supporters in the Korean military (let alone to a sometimes uninformed and emotional student mob). Advocates for withdrawing the weapons allegedly based on the peninsula argue that if the situation requires their use as a deterrent, they can be deployed offshore.

If U.S. tactical nuclear weapons are deployed in South Korea, their withdrawal makes sense. By promoting their removal as a good-will gesture and as a symbol of United States desire to promulgate peace and tranquility in Asia, the U.S. enhances its image in the eyes of the entire Asian region and serves to counter the numerous "peace initiatives" of General Secretary Gorbachev.

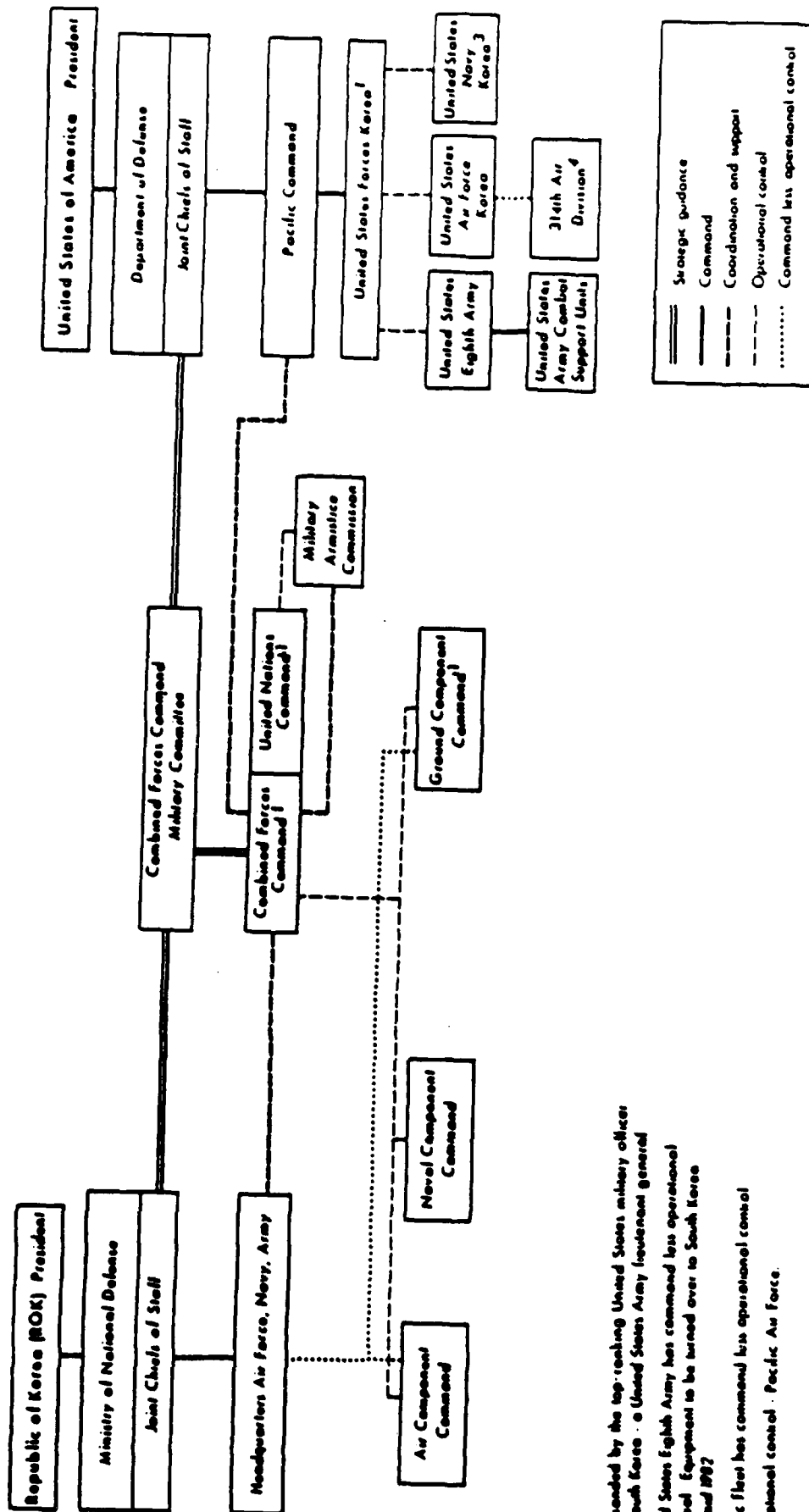
--ROK/U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC)

An extremely emotional issue with many Koreans is the continued military command relationship whereby a U.S. general officer (serving as CINCCFC) has operational control over virtually all of the Republic of Korea's combat forces. Although a small number of Koreans still argue in favor of the current system, an increasingly larger number are citing this command arrangement as a sore point in U.S. - South Korean relations.⁵⁰

Korean students consider such American dominance over Korean affairs an affront to Korean nationalism.⁵¹

The Combined Forces Command (CFC) was established in 1978 and has an extremely complex command and control arrangement. Command relationships are established through a combination of strategic guidance, coordination authority, operational control, and command less operational control lines of authority. The CINCCFC also serves as the Commander, United Nations Command (CINCUNC) and maintains an awkward responsibility requiring him to respond through both the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the ROK Minister of National Defense (see figure 4).⁵² Although during peacetime (Armistice) the CINCCFC has operational control over major ROK combat units, he has no peacetime operational control over U.S. forces--with the exception of a few air-defense assets. Additional U.S. forces are only placed under CINCCFC control if the U.S. declares an increased defense readiness condition (see figure 5).⁵³

The CINCCFC operates with a combined staff and has an air, naval and ground component command (figure 4). The air component commander (ACC) is a U.S. Air Force lieutenant general, who has a South Korean general officer as his deputy commander. The naval component commander (NCC) is a ROK admiral, whose deputy commander is a U.S. admiral. The CINCCFC also serves as the ground component commander (GCC), with the CFC staff pulling double duty and serving also as a GCC staff.



¹Commanded by the top-ranking United States military officer in South Korea - a United States Army lieutenant general

²United States Eighth Army has command less operational control. Equipment to be turned over to South Korea by mid 1992

³Pacific Fleet has command less operational control

⁴Operational control - Pacific Air Force.

Figure 4. Organization of the Combined Forces Command

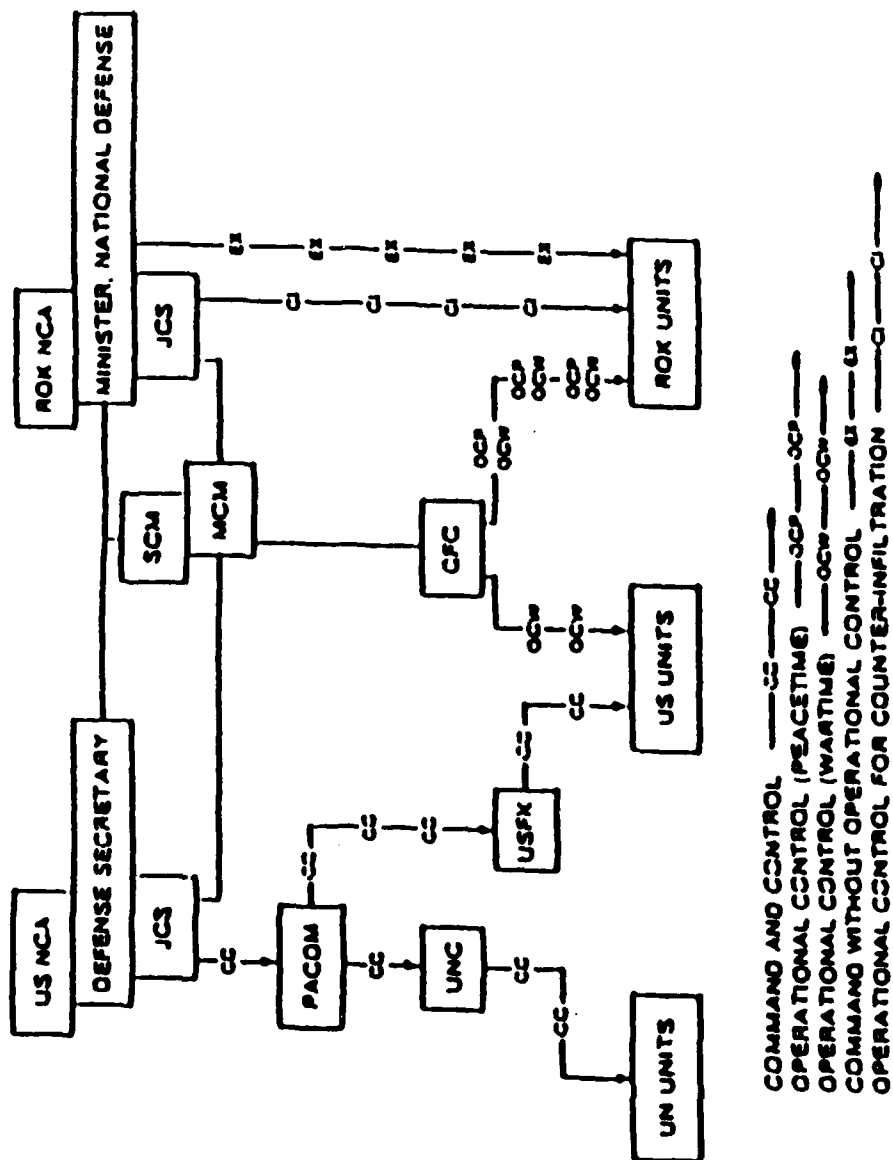


Figure 5. CFC Command and Control Structure

Intertwined with this complex organization is the Combined Field Army (CFA)-- another combined ROK/U.S. command. The CFA is commanded by a U.S. lieutenant general. It operates with a combined staff and has two ROK Corps under its control in both peace and war. As with the CFC, no U.S. Army element is directly under the control of the CFA during peacetime. Once again, command arrangements require a U.S. general officer to exercise control over ROK military units--a relationship many Koreans feel is blatantly unfair. Consequently, anti-U.S. sentiments have spread widely. In a poll conducted for Korean high school students at the end of 1988, students listed the United States as the country they dislike second only to Japan, Korea's traditional aggressor.⁵⁴

A more comprehensive analysis of this issue--which would require a detailed review of specific defense plans, force locations etc.--is beyond the scope (and classification) of this paper. However, it is possible to provide at least one alternative proposal which many feel is a viable option to the current structure.

A short-term alternative which should be implemented is the establishment of the GCC under the command of a ROK army general officer: this would take ROK army forces from under the direct command of a U.S. general (CINCCFC). Placing ROK forces under command of a national commander would give South Korea greater command and control over its own forces and hopefully serve to diffuse anti-American sentiment. Although some argue this

alternative does not go far enough, since the overall commander is still U.S. (CINCCFC), it is a progressive and logical first step.

Simultaneous with the establishment of the GCC under a ROK commander, the Combined Field Army should be disestablished. The current U.S. Army lieutenant general commanding the CFA would then become the GCC deputy commander, and key U.S. officers assigned to CFA would be reassigned to the GCC to form a combined staff. This would alleviate the current situation wherein the CFC staff finds itself immersed in a large number of issues which are GCC specific. Further, it would allow the CFC staff to better concentrate on the integrating nature of their combined role. The GCC staff would thereby be in a posture which would allow it to concentrate its efforts toward fighting the land battle throughout the peninsula.

The long term solution for the Korean command dilemma needs to be visionary, and have a much broader regional focus. United States strategists need to look down the road ten to thirty years to determine the most effective long range options for our forces in the Pacific. For example, as a minimum the U.S. Army could restructure its headquarters elements in the Pacific into a more efficient organizational structure, perhaps by combining Eighth United States Army (EUSA) in Korea, United States Army Japan (USARJ) and Western Command (WESTCOM) into a single major command (MACOM). In order to further streamline and simplify command and control arrangements within the theater, United States Forces

Korea (USFK) and United States Forces Japan (USFJ) could be combined into a single sub-unified command. This new command could be structured to serve under the Pacific Command (PACOM) and would be forward deployed in Japan. The elimination of superfluous headquarters elements would allow for a reduction of both military and civilian personnel spaces and thus make Congress happy. In addition, it would allow EUSA to vacate Yongsan garrison in Korea and therefore make Korea happy, provide the Unified Commander (PACOM) a single point of contact for Army forces in the Pacific, and insure that a U.S. Army headquarters remains in the Pacific to coordinate joint/combined operations when the CFC is eventually disestablished.

Concurrently, the U.S. Army should restructure the Second Infantry Division into a more mobile and self-sustaining force; so in addition to serving as a strategic reserve for Korea, it could respond to a variety of contingencies. Although the Pacific will continue to be predominately an air/sea theater, it will be important to maintain a credible ground force in Asia as a symbol of American commitment to the Asian-Pacific region.

SUMMARY

This study has attempted to show why Korea is important to U.S. national security by

- * Highlighting the key historical events which have impacted on U.S. policy toward Korea.

- * Emphasizing the importance of continued stability on the Korean peninsula to both the U.S. and our Asian allies.
- * Identifying America's national security objectives and interests in the Asian-Pacific region.
- * Examining the major military issues causing friction between the U.S. and South Korea.
- * Suggesting a future focus (and future force structure) for U.S. Army involvement in Asia.

As we move down the road toward the twenty-first century, we must not forget the lessons of history. The United States last three wars have involved fighting in the Asian-Pacific region (World War II, Korea, Vietnam). All three wars were to a great extent the result of vacillation in American policy which caused our enemies to question our resolve to support Asian allies.

There is no question that Asia is the fastest growing and most dynamic area of the world. The tremendous economic, political and military potential of Asia, vis-a-vis a declining though still important Western Europe, justifies an enlightened, visionary and consistent long-term U.S. strategy which insures that our adversaries have no doubts about American resolve to defend our interests in the Asian-Pacific theater. As noted by a Future Security Working Group paper submitted to the President's Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy,

In the next two decades the security environment facing the United States will change as a result of broad economic, demographic, and military trends that are already taking shape...it is doubtful that U.S. strategic thinking has absorbed them...the year 2010 will see a new global-military environment emerge--an environment that defense planners must understand today if they hope to shape it in years to come.⁵⁵

The current problems facing the U.S. in Korea are to a great extent the result of rising South Korean nationalism and self-confidence. Further, they are typical of the types of issues America will be faced with throughout Asia as newly industrialized countries emerge to take their place on the world stage. Actions the U.S. needs to take are:

- * Establish consistent long-range policy goals for Korea and the Asia-Pacific theater.
- * Resist pressure to withdraw American forces from Korea. Maintain a forward-deployed ground force in Korea as a symbol of U.S. commitment to the region.
- * In consultation with our allies, restructure the Second Infantry Division into a more mobile and self-sustaining force which could respond to a variety of regional contingencies.
- * As a symbol of U.S. desire for peace and tranquillity in Asia, insure that no U.S. tactical nuclear weapons are deployed on the Korean peninsula.
- * Disestablish the Combined Field Army (CFA) and utilize its assets to establish a ground component command (GCC) under the Combined Forces Command (CFC). The GCC should be commanded by a Republic of Korea general officer.
- * Combine the headquarters elements of EUSA, USARJ, and WESTCOM into a single Army MACOM for the Pacific theater.
- * Establish a sub-unified command for the Asian-Pacific region.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

...the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet not withstanding go out to meet it.

Thucydides

The twenty-first century will be characterized by change--change in a shift toward a multipolar world, change in alliances, change in technology, change in the current economic, political and military environment. Asian countries will be on the forward edge of such change.

Current U.S. strategy which emphasizes coalition warfare and deterrence through forward-deployed forces is sound. However, the U.S. cannot afford to be viewed as a lumbering giant frozen in the policies of the past. We need to take appropriate initiatives to relieve tensions in Korea while simultaneously maintaining our posture and influence in Asia. The United States cannot withdraw all U.S. ground forces from Asia and expect to maintain as significant an influence on future Asian initiatives as we have in the past. It is therefore imperative that the U.S. develop a strategy for Asia which is not dependent on "smoke and mirrors." United States policy must allow flexibility for change, while signaling a strong commitment to the ideals of freedom and self-determination--ideals upon which our nation was founded.

U.S. perseverance will continue to be challenged by those whose philosophies do not agree with our own. It will take visionary and determined leadership to deal with such challenges.

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